

GANGSTER SQUAD

By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



Gangster Squad is a very well made film that really tests how we define the good guys and what it takes to be a law enforcer. Set in the days when tough guys wanted to rule their world, and the people who were hurt in the process, the fictional story is about how Los Angeles prevented one mobster from moving in and taking over. This is just pure entertainment and fun if you like gangster movies. Sean Penn does a great job as Mickey Cohen, one of the most calculatingly cruel men ever portrayed on film.

Talk about your bullies! Penn serves up Cohen in his usual, grand, over-the-top style. His makeup was more of a mask than a transformation. Penn is truly a force to be reckoned with. Josh Brolin is more than up to the task. We are asked to take a look at the moral questions of how far do the lawmen have to go to finish the bad guys – and is it worth it? You go, you decide.

As a no-nonsense law man, Brolin's staunch and unwavering strength against the bad guy is a throwback to how we have romanticized the era, its heroes and villains. The language is crisp and smart, and Ryan Gosling proves how very versatile an actor he is. *Gangster Squad* shows how brute force is sometimes needed to battle the forces of evil and to preserve those things that we hold dear. To serve, protect and defend is serious business and not for the uncommitted. The sets and the décor are luscious. The era is really brought back in the look and the feel of the film.

There will always be films made about the good old shoot 'em up days, and I suppose we need these stories to remind us of what no gun control might really look like. The Wild West and Boardwalk Empires may be fun to watch, but I doubt any of us would really want to live there. Like most times gone by, we have the film noir to remind us of the danger that illegal activity represents and why we should choose well which side of the law to live on.

I think *Gangster Squad* is good entertainment and a good date movie if you like guys and molls.

I give *Gangster Squad* four couches.

